

Luxury Goes Off-Road

Redesigned Lexus GX Blends Opulence With Rugged Capability

By Derek Price

CARGAZING.COM

The Lexus GX 550 is fully redesigned for 2024, doubling down on its position as a luxury SUV with serious off-road chops.

After a week with the top-tier Luxury+ trim, it's clear that Lexus has created a vehicle that can tackle both the urban jungle and actual wilderness with equal aplomb – though not without some compromises.

At first glance, the new GX embraces a more muscular, squared-off aesthetic. Drawing inspiration from iconic off-roaders like the Mercedes G-Wagon and Land Rover Defender, the GX's boxy silhouette and upright grille project a no-nonsense attitude. It's a striking departure from Lexus' typically sleek designs, but it effectively communicates the vehicle's dual-nature mission.

Under the hood, the old V8 has been replaced by a twin-turbocharged 3.4-liter V6 producing 349 horsepower and a stout 479 lb-ft of torque. This powerplant provides ample thrust for both highway cruising and crawling over obstacles while improving fuel economy to a still-thirsty 15 mpg city and 21 mpg highway.

A 10-speed automatic transmission manages power delivery smoothly.

The GX's off-road credentials are impressive.



The redesigned GX 550's boxy, muscular styling projects rugged capability, a marked departure from typical Lexus designs.

Standard full-time four-wheel drive, a two-speed transfer case and a Torsen limited-slip center differential provide the foundation for genuine trail-tackling ability.

Available features like an electronic locking rear differential, crawl control and multi-terrain select system further enhance its capabilities. With up to 9,096 pounds of towing capacity, the GX can also handle serious hauling duties.

However, the GX's off-road focus comes with some on-road compromises.

The body-on-frame con-

struction and off-road-tuned suspension result in a ride that's not as plush as some luxury SUV buyers might expect, especially with the optional 22-inch wheels fitted to our tester.

These large wheels look striking but significantly impact ride quality and are ill-suited for any serious off-pavement excursions. Buyers prioritizing comfort would be wise to stick with smaller wheel options.

Inside, the GX showcases Lexus' expertise in crafting luxurious interiors.

Premium materials abound, from supple leather to real

wood trim.

The 14-inch touchscreen infotainment system is responsive and intuitive, a marked improvement over previous Lexus interfaces. Available features like a 21-speaker Mark Levinson audio system, heated and ventilated seats, and a panoramic sunroof create a properly upscale environment.

Cargo space is generous, and the available third row expands seating capacity to seven, though adults will find it cramped. The power-folding rear seats and hands-free liftgate add con-

venience for loading gear or groceries.

Safety is well-addressed with the standard Lexus Safety System+ 3.0, which includes adaptive cruise control, lane-keeping assist and automatic emergency braking.

The available head-up display and 360-degree camera system further aid in both on and off-road situations.

At \$84,665 as tested, the GX 550 Luxury+ commands a significant premium over mainstream SUVs and even some luxury competitors. While its combination of off-road prowess and premium appointments is unique, buyers will need to carefully consider whether they'll truly utilize its capabilities to justify the cost.

Ultimately, the new GX is a vehicle of contrasts. It's a luxurious SUV capable of tackling serious trails, a premium family hauler that can tow like a truck.

For buyers seeking this specific blend of attributes and willing to pay for it, the GX delivers a compelling package. However, those prioritizing on-road comfort or rarely venturing off-pavement may find more suitable options in Lexus' lineup or among competitors.

It's a vehicle that can confidently take you from a black-tie event to a backwoods adventure, all while coddling you in Lexus comfort.

AT A GLANCE

WHAT WAS TESTED?

2024 Lexus GX 550 Luxury+ (\$79,900). Options: Head-up display (\$900), digital key (\$375), cold area package (\$200), tonneau cover (\$110), heated second row (\$440), traffic jam assist (\$620), roof rail cross bars (\$440), carpet cargo mat (\$150), ball mount (\$80), cargo net (\$75), key glove (\$25). Price as tested (including \$1,350 destination charge): \$84,665

BY THE NUMBERS

Wheelbase: 112.2 in.
Length: 197.1 in.
Width: 78 in.
Height: 75.6 in.
Engine: 3.4-liter twin turbocharged V6 (349 hp, 479 ft. lbs.)
Transmission: 10-speed automatic
MPG: 15 city, 21 highway

RATINGS

Style: 9
Performance: 9
Price: 5
Handling: 4
Ride: 6
Comfort: 8
Quality: 10
Overall: 7

WHY BUY IT?

The new GX 550 offers a rare combination of genuine off-road capability and luxurious appointments, making it ideal for affluent buyers who want to tackle trails in comfort – and look good doing it.

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Premium materials and advanced technology create a luxurious cabin environment in the GX 550, belying its serious off-road credentials.

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A CLOSER LOOK



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FACTS, FIGURES AND RATINGS

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